

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Planning Conference Meeting  
July 27, 2023  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Horace Blackman and Secretary Jon Peterson; Visitors Armand Alacbay, Lindsey Burke, Deecy Gray, Jimmy Hazel, Mike Meese, Dolly Oberoi, Bob Pence, Nancy Prowitt, Jeff Rosen and Cully Stimson.

**ABSENT:** Visitors Reg Brown, Anjan Chimaladinne, Wendy Marquez and Bob Witeck.

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Will Gautney, Staff Representative; Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Paul Wyche, Student Representative; Vikas Velagapudi, Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff; Mark Ginsberg, Provost and Executive Vice President; Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration; Trishana Bowden, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Relations/GMUF President; Christine Landoll, President of Alumni Association; Robert Matz, Campus Dean, Mason Korea; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Board of Visitors Committee Faculty Representatives, Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, Members of the President's Council, Members of the Alumni Board Presidents and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Blackman called the planning session to order at 8:19 a.m. and introduced Dr. Washington for opening remarks.

**II. Welcome Remarks, Agenda Overview & Related Topics**

Dr. Washington provided remarks with the following highlights:

- He welcomed the new additions to the president's council and leadership team.
- Challenges for Higher Education:
  - Mental health crisis
  - Economic challenges (recession, inflation, etc.)
- The Effects of Unaddressed Challenges:
  - Over the last ten years (2010 to 2020), there has been an increase in high school graduation rates and a decrease in college enrollment rates. Over the last ten years, higher education has lost four million students and since the pandemic, one million students.
- Most of the County is Already Experiencing the Enrollment Cliff:
  - Only nine states in 2022 saw an increase in their college enrollments: Indiana, Colorado, New Hampshire, Utah, the District of Columbia, Montana, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Arizona.
  - All other states saw a decrease in college enrollment.
- Consumer Price Index Progression as of March 2023:
  - There have been dramatic increases in cost.
- Expenses continue to grow and now exceed revenues, on average.
- Disruption via Artificial Intelligence (AI):
  - Last year about 65% of students used ChatGPT in the classroom for assignments.
  - ChatGPT started the trend and now new AI programs are being created at a fast rate.
- High school graduates in Northern Virginia will increase to above 40K students and will remain so through 2030.

- Mason's primary source of graduates is primarily from Northern Virginia:
  - 70% of Mason's students are from Northern Virginia.
  - Other institutions are now marketing in Northern Virginia.
- About 70% of voters continue to agree that college is still a good value despite the increasing cost and difficulty finding jobs:
  - In your opinion, is having a college education still a good value even though some college graduates have trouble finding work in their chosen fields of study these days?
    - 74% of those surveyed said yes.
  - In your opinion, is having a college education still a good value even though it has become more expensive?
    - 68% of those surveyed said yes.
- Increasing enrollment does not mean decreasing quality:
  - Greater than 70% of students entering Mason have a 3.5 GPA or above.
- Across the Board Performance:
  - Enrollment: Graduated and enrolled the largest and most diverse classes ever.
    - High admission and graduation rate.
  - Opportunity: 24% of students are first-generation and 29% are eligible for Pell Grants.
  - Regional Impact: 77% of 2022 grads are employed in the Washington, D.C., metro area.
    - Mason Enterprise had an impact of 40K hours of 1:1 counseling to 10,000 small businesses.
- 2022-23 Presidential Metrics
  - There is still some work to be done in the U.S. news report rankings.
- Our Plan for Success:
  - Engage the Unengaged:
    - Mason Virginia Promise:
      - Has expanded by four community colleges and the goal is to have 20 colleges.
    - Spanish Language Engagement:
      - Only institution engaging those of Spanish language.
    - Direct Entry:
      - Developing the first direct entry program in Virginia. Launching a pilot this year with multiple school districts where high school students receive a conditional acceptance letter so they don't have to apply to attend Mason.
  - Manage Cost Uncertainty:
    - \$41 million E&G budget deficit is a manageable issue; Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, will speak later this afternoon on this topic. The deficit is primarily due to having to hire more people than expected this year and raising salaries for faculty and staff to a more competitive level.
  - Partner or Perish:
    - Touched on the Comprehensive Campaign which Trishana Bowden, Vice President, Advancement and Alumni Relations/President, GMUF will present later in the morning.
    - Looking to expand the Fairfax West Campus.

- Still looking to expand medical education; are in active conversations with INOVA, Adventist and VHC.
- The Bottom Line:
  - Universities are experiencing unprecedented challenges (enrollment, perception and funding).
    - “Roughly one in four of the richest students [top 1% household income] attend an elite college. In contrast, less than one-half of 1 percent of children from the bottom fifth of American families attend an elite college.” - Emmanuel Saez
    - “American higher education has become a powerful means for perpetuating class divisions across generations.” - Richard Reeves
  - There is a need for academic institutions to be more inclusive. This is what Mason is doing and why Mason is All Together Different.

### III. Introductions – New Board of Visitors (BOV) Members

Rector Blackman introduced Armand Alacbay (JD '04), Deecy Gray, Jeff Rosen and Cully Stimson (JD '92) as the newest members of the BOV.

### IV. Framing of the Day

Provost Ginsberg provided brief remarks and framed the day:

- Mason was established in 1957 and has evolved from 17 students to the largest public research university in Virginia.
- Freedom and learning are the two most important words for Mason as outlined on the University's seal.
- The Mason mission: George Mason University is an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world.
- Our Values:
  - All of Mason's values are important.
  - We act with integrity.
  - We thrive together.
- Mason provides access to excellence and opportunity.
  - Mason is an engine for innovation, workforce development and the economic development of this region and the state.
- Please keep in mind...success is never final.
- Every challenge is an opportunity.
- Make sure we have the right sails raised to propel Mason forward on the correct course.
- The following topics will be discussed today:
  - Small Group Breakout Sessions:
    - Freedom of Speech
      - Is an important issue.
    - Student Success and Behavior Health:
      - The provost of a university is generally considered the Chief Academic Officer but he sees his role as the Chief Success Officer.
      - Continue to invest in the wellness of Mason's students.
    - The Mason Brand:

- Reenergizing Mason’s brand.
  - Research:
    - Second largest portfolio in the country.
  - Full Group Sessions:
    - Philanthropy:
      - \$1 Billion Campaign
    - Finances:
      - Need the resources to achieve the successes we seek.
    - University of the Future:
      - The key topic—what is the future of higher education and what will the future bring to higher education?
- Seeking today to create the next normal. Today is about dreaming big, setting goals and taking action. It’s Mason’s Time.

#### V. Breakout Sessions

Provost Ginsberg provided instruction for the breakout sessions. Each station will run for 18 minutes and will move on a rotating basis. The station list follows:

- Station #1: Freedom of Speech – Facilitated by Paul Liberty and Rose Pascarell
- Station #2: Student Success & Mental Health – Facilitated by David Burge and Rachel Wernicke
- Station #3: Branding – Facilitated by Paul Allvin
- Station #4: Research – Facilitated by Andre Marshall

#### VI. Our Foundation and Our Future: Philanthropy’s Impact on George Mason University

Trishana Bowden, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Relations/GMUF President presented the following philanthropy information.

- Philanthropy’s Impact on George Mason University
  - Provided the evolution of Mason and noted the following founders: Til Hazel, Milton Peterson, Dwight Schar, Ed Meese and George Johnson. They understood the importance of education, employment, healthcare and the arts for the residents in this area. Thankful for their dedication of establishing.
- When Mason was founded in June of 1957 the Fairfax Campus had four buildings. Those original buildings are still being used today.
  - The Fairfax Board of Supervisors provided \$25K to fund a two-year branch college of the University of Virginia. University College opened in 1958. At that same time the then Mayor Jack Wood purchased and donated 150 acres which is now the Fairfax Campus and was renamed George Mason University.
  - In 1966 those same leaders helped to establish Mason’s Foundation knowing that there was a need for a separate nonprofit with a focus on receiving, managing, investing and administering private gifts made in support of Mason.
- First Campaign, 1996-2005: The Campaign for George Mason University:
  - Chaired by Sidney O. Dewberry who made the first seven-figure gift.
  - Goal: \$110,000,000
  - Raised: \$139,614,629
  - Philanthropic Impact:
    - Volgenau School of Engineering
    - Mason Neck Retreat and Conference Center

- Dewberry Chair in Civil, Environmental, and Infrastructure Engineering
  - Center for History and New Media Endowment
  - Helen A. Keller Center for Human disAbilities
- Second Campaign, 2008-2018: Faster Farther
  - Chaired by Jimmy Hazel, JD '84
  - Goal: \$500,000,000
  - Raised: \$690,000,000
  - Philanthropic Impact:
    - Rise to R1 Research Status
    - Schar School of Policy and Government
    - Antonin S. Scalia Law School
    - Peterson Family Health Sciences Hall
    - 300 new scholarships for students
- Raised more than \$820 million between the two campaigns.
- Kelly Rollison, Vice President of The Compass Group presented on the following:
  - How Campaigns Drive a Culture of Philanthropy:
    - Campaigns continue to be the best approach to obtain funds.
    - Campaigns allow endowment growth.
  - Endowment Opportunities During a Campaign
    - Requires intentional strategies for the why and the impact.
    - George Mason University
      - Total Enrollment for Fall 2022 was 39,607.
      - Endowment FY22 market value of \$158 million.
  - If you are strategic, your campaign goals will be met.
  - Ensure that interactions with donors are intentional and meaningful.
  - Invite everyone to celebrate meeting the goal.
  - Have to invest in the philanthropy infrastructure.
- Trishana Bowden, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Relations/GMUF President presented the following information:
  - Third Campaign, FY2021-FY2028: Mason Now: Power the Possible:
    - Raise \$1 billion by 2028.
    - Top Campaign Priorities:
      - Student Success
      - Research
      - Innovation
      - Community
      - Sustainable Future
    - Benchmark chart was displayed outlining how much certain Mason groups need to raise. Please refer to the meeting materials for the chart.
    - Campaign Progress
      - FY21 = \$101,367,061 raised
      - FY22 = \$118,191,195 raised
      - FY23 = \$139,301,348 raised
      - Highlighted some early donations:
        - \$50 million committed by the Costello Family to rename the School of Business.
        - \$10 million gift from Barry Dewberry and Arlene Evans to support the Center for the Arts renovation.

- Gift to name the Baroni Center for Government Contracting within the School of Business.
- Gift from Reva and Sid Dewberry for the School of Music.
- The Mercatus Center received a donation as a result of the Fast Grants Program.
- Campaign Phases
  - FY21-23, Preparation and Planning Phase
  - FY23-26, Lead and Major Donor Phase
  - FY27-28, Capstone Phase
  - The leadership campaign launched on April 20, 2023.
  - The faculty and staff campaign launch event is September 28, 2023.
- The Mason Now: Power the Possible campaign video was played: <https://youtu.be/tMGkPY497MU>.
- Your Role in Power the Possible:
  - Your advocacy and philanthropic support are needed.
- Powering the Possible: We Need Your Help:
  - Make Mason a top philanthropy priority and support this campaign as a philanthropic leader.
  - Provide introductions and information on prospects for 7, 8, and 9-figure transformational gifts.
  - Host/Co-host small intimate gatherings to bring together the prospective leaders of this campaign.
  - Don't forget about Mason! Connect your story to Mason's story and share it with everyone you speak with.
  - The Board of Visitors and the Board of Trustees working together has a huge impact.
  - There are many naming opportunities.
- To date Mason has received \$358 million toward the \$1 billion goal.
- Campaign updates will be given at the BOV Development Committee meeting on September 28, 2023.

## VII. Lunch Recess

Rector Blackman called for lunch recess at 12:03 p.m. and advised the planning session would reconvene at 1:15 p.m.

Rector Blackman reconvened the planning session at 1:17 p.m.

## VIII. Modernizing Mason: Building Financial Sustainability & Effectiveness

Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, presented Growth & Efficiency: Building Financial Suitability & Effectiveness:

- Mason is a Success Story:
  - Mason continues to deliver access to excellence for more students with fewer resources than its peers.
- Better results with fewer resources.
- Mason provides the second-highest economic mobility among all Virginia institutions.
- Supports all Virginia learners: transfers, undergraduate students over 25 years old and part-time undergraduates through a variety of programs and pathways.

- Maintaining Affordability:
  - When state and tuition funding are combined, Mason is nearly \$6,000 per in-state student FTE below the mean of five doctoral peer institutions.
- Operational Efficiency:
  - Mason has significantly fewer employees per student than nearly all Virginia doctoral peers.
  - Mason's current operations have grown lean. Coupled with rising costs of service delivery, this is not sustainable.
- René Stewart O'Neal, Vice President for Strategic Budgeting & Planning presented the following information:
  - Approved FY24 Operation Budget:
    - \$300 flat dollar tuition increase for every student.
    - The State's budget remains pending.
    - Baseline projects \$41 million E&G shortfall, with total operating at \$32 million shortfall.
    - Mason has the largest student body in Virginia.
    - Years of underfunding have caught up with us.
  - FY24 Proposed Operating Budget Scenarios:
    - Working on budget reduction strategies.
    - Experiencing operating cost escalations.
    - Pressures to limit tuition.
  - Operating Challenges & Difficult Decisions
    - Mitigating operating shortfall.
- Sharon Heinle, Vice President for Finance presented the following information:
  - Pathways to Sustainability:
    - Exploring new revenue streams.
  - Efficiency Initiatives:
    - Improving efficiency and effectiveness of operational infrastructure to enhance service delivery
    - Alignment of people and technology through modernization.
  - Process improvement is a continuous process.
  - Research Administration:
    - Integrated web-based system to support research through streamlined workflows, enhanced reporting, and improved compliance.
  - The Foundation for Progress: Chart of Accounts Redesign:
    - The number of accounts has been reduced.
    - The next step is to improve the performance, accuracy and efficiency of Mason's administrative infrastructure through:
      - Additional Banner Functionality
      - Future Budget Model
      - Process Automation
  - Financial Automation:
    - A Leveraging Automation video was played.
- Paul Wyche, Student Body President and BOV Undergraduate Student Representative presented the following item:
  - Working this year to ensure that the voices of the students are heard and respected.
  - Why aren't Mason students treated equitably?
    - Mason is accessible and affordable.

- Has the second lost in-state undergraduate tuition rate in the state.
- Mason students get less state support.
  - Least amount of support per student in the state and as such he feels less valued.
- NoVA Costs More
  - High cost of living.
- State Appropriations per In-State Undergrad (FTE): E&G General Fund (excluding aid)
  - Mason has received more financial aid from the state but is still not equitable.
- Just imagine how much more Mason would do with equitable funding.

Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, concluded the segment by noting Mason needs more gifts and endowments. Right now, Mason is all together financially different and should not be.

#### **IX. Keynote: Innovation in Higher Education During Uncertain Times**

Dr. Washington introduced Dr. Andrew Flagel, President & CEO of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area (CUWMA) who was the Dean of Enrollment at Mason for over a decade. During his time at Mason, Dr. Flagel created groundbreaking new programs for military veterans, international students, and transfer students. Dr. Flagel also founded and lead the Washington Youth Summit and he spearheaded the pathways partnership with Northern Virginia Community College and Fairfax County Schools. Dr. Flagel has been a great friend to Mason and Dr. Washington welcomed him home even if it's for a short time.

Dr. Flagel provided the following information:

- Focused on three topics: enrollment, public perception of higher education and the entwining of increasing costs with dwindling resources.
  1. Enrollment:
    - It's a buyers' market due to the enrollment cliff.
    - Birth rates eighteen years ago started a steep decline and are continuing to decline to this day.
    - The prediction is that in 2025 there will be a decrease in enrollment due to the decreased birth rates.
    - From 2025 through 2037 there will be 10% fewer high school students in the country. Which equates to hundreds of thousands fewer high school students.
    - The student population is also becoming more diverse.
    - Other regions are taking aggressive actions such as increasing state aid to retain their in-state students.
    - Mason is in one of the densest regions for colleges and universities.
    - Almost every other week another university opens a storefront in the area. Their purpose isn't to bring in students but to take them away.
    - The competition in this region is intensifying.
    - Workforce partnerships is an opportunity that Mason has.
    - Believes that higher education needs to think creatively about new markets.



- The largest population growth is within the 50-plus age group. They represent less than 1% of enrollment in higher education. Some universities have retirement communities for this student demographic
  - Another underserved population within most metropolitan areas are students with some credits and no degree which represents thousands of people within the community. There are partnership programs to reconnect these students to generate new opportunities.
  - Potential for corporate partnerships with respect to upskilling their employees.
2. Public Perception of Higher Education:
- Local versus national public perception differs a little. As in, typically residents like their local institution but not others.
  - The general perception problem is the belief that degrees are not needed in the workforce.
  - Discussed the perceived value challenges.
    - The perception that college costs too much. There is a debt and cost crisis.
      - The net cost has stayed flat or declined. Generally, not increasing the income per student overall.
      - The debt crisis is a completion crisis. If students were completing their degrees and moving into jobs the debt crisis would be solved. The income difference between having a high school diploma, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree varies greatly. A higher education degree is worth the most in this region.
      - Completing a degree is how to obtain the maximum value for the time.
    - The paper barrier perception:
      - Having a credential as an obligation to have a job is preventing people from going into jobs.
      - Having apprenticeship programs out of high school will solve the problem. The issue is that if those jobs go away after five years or so that demographic doesn't have skills for other positions. Need to create a workforce that is scalable and adaptable which is what higher education does well.
      - The perception that higher education isn't preparing people for the workforce is a disconnect of information.
3. Increasing Costs with Decreasing Resources:
- Believes this is the hardest metropolitan area to fundraise in. There are major corporations in the area, but they support the federal government and not the local community.
  - Fundraising is about listening and building trust and connections within the community.
  - Suggested that board members help establish Mason connections by bringing them to basketball games or an art show, a university-related

activity, etc. The board member doesn't have to ask for the money, they just make the connections.

- Board members should figure out where their expertise can best be used to help.

Dr. Flagel concluded his segment by noting that Research One universities are complex systems and they cannot be successful without supportive dynamic boards. It is not possible nor is it necessary for board members to know all the complexities of the university. Support and collaboration are the important elements of what is needed from board members.

#### **X. Reflections & Closing Comments**

Dr. Washington closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their engagement and participation.

#### **XI. Adjournment**

Rector Blackman made a final plea for the remaining \$642 million to reach the Mason Now Campaign goal. He adjourned the session at 3:32 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury  
Secretary pro tem